



UNISCI Discussion Papers

NATO'S ENDURING CHALLENGE: MATCHING AMERICAN PRIMACY AND EUROPEAN AMBITIONS

AUTHOR¹:**STEN RYNNING****University of Southern Denmark****DATE:****October 2005**

Introduction

In the fall of 2003, the U.S. Ambassador to NATO, Nicholas Burns, called a special meeting of the North Atlantic Council in the belief that he had recognized “the most serious threat to the future of NATO.”² The call came in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the March 2003 invasion of Iraq, and yet the call had little to do with such dramatic external events. The threat came from within the Alliance itself, Burns alleged, and concerned the European Union’s (EU) blueprint for developing “structured defense cooperation” as part of the EU’s new constitutional treaty. One might think that Burns had a gift of foresight because subsequent transatlantic disputes seemed to evolve around Europeans’ reluctance to bow to American policy and concomitant desire to construct alternative options of security cooperation. These disputes concern broad issues such as the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol, and fighting diseases such as AIDS, but also issues related specifically to security cooperation, such as a reform program for the Greater Middle East – and NATO’s involvement in it, a comprehensive missile defense policy, interpretations of preemptive defense within the inherent right of states to self-defense, the status of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), and the negotiation of a protocol to the Biological Toxins and Weapons Convention (BWC).

These contentious issues along with Burns’ call to arms illustrate that transatlantic relations are in constant need of diplomatic maintenance and that the internal political organization of NATO is essential to its proper functioning and ability to operate in the external environment. The issues do *not* illustrate that NATO is doomed. NATO was always host to contentious debates over strategic issues, and the distinction between these past controversies and current debates is mainly a matter of politics: the distinction is difficult to make analytically and is often made for political purposes. Instead there is a strong analytical argument to be made in favor of NATO continuity.³ The argument is composed of both power and purpose. In terms of *power*, the United States has the power to sustain NATO, while

¹ *Las opiniones expresadas en estos artículos son propias de sus autores. Estos artículos no reflejan necesariamente la opinión de UNISCI.* The views expressed in these articles are those of the authors. These articles do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISCI.

² “The US Drives Wedge between EU Leaders Over Defence Plans Cooperation,” *The Independent*, 18 October, 2003.

³ I make this argument at length in Rynning, Sten (2005): *NATO Renewed: The Power and Purpose of Transatlantic Cooperation*. New York, Palgrave.



Europeans lack the power to challenge NATO. This is not the end of the story, though. In terms of *purpose*, there are enough values and interests to sustain the choice for alliance continuity, although it will take continued political leadership to realize this choice.

The article is organized so as to demonstrate this argument. It begins with the argument that power is driving the allies apart – that a new balance of power is developing between Europe and the United States. The argument is made by Structural Realists who believe that the EU's security and defense policy (ESDP) represents the beginning of an inevitable process of balancing. The article then counters this pessimistic view of things. Drawing on the tradition of Classical Realism and the view that power is guided by purpose, it makes the argument that a balance is not in the making. Instead, Europe and the United States have ample reason to stand united in the face of new challenges linked to the political order in the middle East, issues of proliferation and missile defense, and finally and significantly, the emergence of China and also India as new major players on the global chessboard. The second section of the article uses the case of the Middle East to illuminate the underpinnings of the argument that opportunities for continued cooperation do exist. The third and final section explores the likelihood that these opportunities will be utilized, or, put differently, whether political leaders are about to squander them. The third section provides a guardedly optimistic assessment via an investigation of the following issues: the organization of flexible frameworks of cooperation within the West; policy toward two rogue states, North Korea and Iran; and policy toward emerging great powers such as China.

1. Balancing

Structural Realists have generated the orthodox belief that overwhelming power provokes counter-moves in the shape of new alliances.⁴ As the name indicates, Structural Realism is premised on the idea that the structure of world politics shapes the alliance choice of states. Thus, the key concept in this theory is polarity, and the key idea is that different types of polarity will off-set different types of alliance behavior.

Structural Realists agree that the structure of world politics is changing: the world has for little more than a decade been unipolar, but this condition will not last. Unipolarity is slowly but surely eroding and a new era of multipolarity is coming into being. In the short run this may not be of great consequence for NATO because the leader of the Alliance, the United States, is motivated to maintain NATO. Kenneth Waltz and John Mearsheimer – two leading Structural Realists – thus agree that it is in the United States' interests to maintain NATO for a while. However, in the long run, they agree, the United States will weaken its commitment and the *raison d'être* of NATO will disappear.

In the immediate wake of the fall of the Warsaw Pact and the end of the Cold War, these Structural Realists believed that NATO was doomed almost right away. In the absence of the Soviet threat, the Atlantic Alliance would simply fall apart.⁵ As the Alliance failed to behave as these theorists predicted, they revised their views slightly and added the U.S. interest in maintaining NATO at least for the short run. The way in which they made this additional argument is important for their understanding of NATO and the potential of EU balancing.

John Mearsheimer believes two things are happening in the transatlantic arena: first, that the United States is drifting towards a new strategy of “off-shore” balancing, which is to say

⁴ Originating with Waltz, Kenneth (1979): *Theory of International Politics*. New York, McGraw-Hill.

⁵ Mearsheimer, John J.: “Back to the Future: Instability in Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Summer 1990), pp. 5-56. Waltz, Kenneth N.: “The Emerging Structure of International Politics,” *International Security*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Fall 1993), p. 75.



that it will significantly reduce its presence in Europe; second, that Europe will become a more dangerous region because European great powers will begin a multipolar game of checking German power.⁶ In Mearsheimer's lens, the United States has no appetite beyond dominance of the Western hemisphere and European allies, perceiving this limited appetite for influence, have already begun jockeying for influence in the new – and more dangerous – Europe. The United States remained engaged in NATO for a while because it feared that Europe might produce a power rival, a peer competitor, particularly a new and stronger Germany, but, assured of the other European powers' ability to check German power, the United States will bend to its engrained preference for an off-shore strategy.

Mearsheimer thus does not believe that Europe will be able to balance American power, even though unipolarity is giving way to multipolarity. Instead, multipolarity will produce balancing *within* Europe, a dangerous process centered on Germany – and the alleged fear of German domination. Mearsheimer's forecast for both NATO and Europe is thus a distinctively pessimistic one, and the question is whether the attack of September 11, 2001 has caused Mearsheimer to revise or change his view of things.

One year subsequent to the September 11 attack Mearsheimer offered few insights into European affairs but instead extended his “off-shore” argument to the question of the United States and the Middle East. It will be a mistake to seek to democratize the world and to do so mainly by military force, Mearsheimer wrote, and the United States should instead “emphasize intelligence, diplomacy and covert actions over military force” and “rely on the states in the region [the Middle East] to balance each other.”⁷ This is not what happened, as the United States in 2003 invaded Iraq and overthrew the Saddam Hussein regime, thus straining diplomatic relations to its allies. Mearsheimer spoke out against the war because he found Iraq deterrable and unrelated to the fight against terrorism.⁸ By implication, the United States is being overstretched and is thus even more likely to pursue an off-shore strategy vis-à-vis Europe. Mearsheimer thus does not believe that recent developments and controversies impact on his main conclusion: that the United States will withdraw and Europe will descend into an era of internal balancing. Mearsheimer continues to advance the off-shore option for the United States, particularly in relation to Europe and the Middle East. The one region in the world where this strategy will not suffice is Asia because “China cannot rise peacefully.”⁹ In Asia, the United States must engage, if not a peer-competitor will develop. We will return to the question of China but for the moment we note that China provokes Mearsheimer's call for U.S. activism, not transatlantic unity.

Kenneth Waltz likewise had to explain why NATO did not as predicted disappear in the immediate wake of the end of the Cold War. Waltz has argued that the reason is one of influence: the United States wants to maintain its grip on the foreign and security policies of European allies, and NATO is the best means for doing so.¹⁰ The unipolar power is thus determined to capitalize on its power. Unipolarity is dangerous, though, Waltz contends, and not so much for Europe as for the United States. Waltz is in fact a “United States pessimist” where Mearsheimer is a “Europe pessimist.” Europe is doing fairly well, according to Waltz,

⁶ Mearsheimer, John J. (2001): *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York, Norton, p. 394. See also Mearsheimer: “The Future of the American Pacifier,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 5 (September/October 2001), pp. 46-61.

⁷ Mearsheimer, John: “Hearts and Minds,” *The National Interest*, Vol. 69 (Fall 2002), consulted on-line.

⁸ See for instance Mearsheimer, John and Walt, Stephen: “An Unnecessary War,” *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2003), pp. 50-59.

⁹ Johan Mearsheimer's view in his dialogue with Zbigniew Brzezinski: “Clash of the Titans,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 146 (January 2005), p. 46.

¹⁰ Waltz, Kenneth N., “Structural Realism after the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Summer 2000), p. 20.



because the so-called “fine grained” European balance of power discourages expansion and instills trust: Europe can thus continue its pattern of cooperation.¹¹ But Europe cannot amass enough coherence and power to balance the United States. No state or group of states can do so “in the foreseeable future,” Waltz argues, and, he continues, this is a tragedy for the United States because countries that dispose of overwhelming power end up abusing it. We need checks and balances but have none internationally, and the United States will therefore inevitably end up abusing its power.¹²

Waltz does not believe that Europe has a German problem, as does Mearsheimer, but Waltz’s perspective still does not provide much comfort for proponents of Atlantic Alliance continuity. European cooperation and integration may continue but American power abuses will make European governments choose Atlantic abandonment over entrapment, and NATO will thus be doomed.

This may already be happening, argues Barry Posen, a Structural Realist also. There is no doubt that the current world is unipolar and that many European allies will have no choice but to “bandwagon” with the United States. In other words, the lack of alternative options will ensure NATO continuity. However, some of the large European countries are becoming dissatisfied with bandwagoning, and Posen believes this is the key *raison d’être* of the EU’s security and defense policy.¹³ We are not quite at the stage where these states actually balance the United States but they are indeed looking for “other options.” One option is to “pass the buck,” which is what some European countries, France and Germany notable among them, did in the context of Iraq, refraining from participating in the war. Another option is to prepare “balancing,” and this preparation is clearly visible in the ESDP, Posen argues.

Balancing is not a given because, as both Waltz and Posen would argue, Europeans are not sufficiently united and most Europeans continue to value a strategic partnership with the United States. But the underlying trend is nevertheless toward transatlantic disengagement. The European Security Strategy adopted by the EU in December 2003 is illustrative. The EU identifies the same threats as the United States in its national security strategy, and as such the EU is out to “please the US.” Still, and in light of his assessment of underlying trends, Posen adds that “Europe probably will not provide much real help to the US in its global pursuits.”¹⁴

This position feeds into a debate on a new type of balancing behavior, which in the Realist vocabulary amounts to “soft balancing.” Robert Pape believes that the United States has been spared this counter-move for most of the 1990s but now the process has begun. The allies, exasperated by the futility of “hard bargaining” within the Alliance framework and yet too weak to really balance the United States, have begun “soft balancing:” denying U.S. forces access to certain facilities, raising diplomatic objections and costs for the United States, sustaining regional economic activity, and signaling the intention to resist American policy.¹⁵ T. V. Paul concurs, noting that Russia and China began “soft balancing” during the Kosovo

¹¹ For this argument, made in the vein of Waltz’s analysis, see Van Evera, Stephen: “Primed for Peace: Europe after the Cold War,” *International Security*, Vol. 15, No. 3 (Winter 1990), pp. 7-57. For Van Evera’s theory of “fine-grained” Realism, see his (1999): *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press.

¹² See the 2003 interview with Kenneth Waltz posted on the internet by the Institute of International Studies, the University of California at Berkeley, <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people3/Waltz/waltz-con0.html>.

¹³ Posen, Barry R.: “ESDP and the Structure of World Power,” *The International Spectator*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (2004), pp. 5-17.

¹⁴ Posen, Barry R.: “The European Security Strategy: Practical Implications,” *Oxford Journal on Good Governance*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2004), pp. 31-38.

¹⁵ Pape, Robert A.: “Soft Balancing against the United States,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 7-45, at pp. 36-41.



crisis of 1999 while France and Germany joined the endeavor during the Iraq crisis of 2002-2003.¹⁶

It comes as no surprise that Structural Realists emphasize structure, but they reach varying conclusions about it. They all agree that the fading moment of unipolarity is dividing the Atlantic allies, and that the predominance of the United States is dangerous for the United States itself, tempted as the country is to engage in vast and intrinsically difficult missions. Some Structural Realists, like Mearsheimer, believe that multipolarity in Europe heralds a new and dangerous era marked by the effort to contain the united Germany. Other Structural Realists, like Waltz and Posen, believe Europe is capable of cooperating internally and might be able to launch a challenge to the United States in the long run. In Mearsheimer's lens, the disputes related to the Middle East, preemptive defense, missile defense, the test ban treaty (CTBT) and so on are signs of detachment, and the United States should not worry because Europeans, inward-looking and obsessed with Germany's position, are increasingly irrelevant to these questions. These same disputes take on a slightly different meaning in Waltz' and Posen's framework. Waltz is fearful that the United States is intoxicated by power and is out of geopolitical control, while Posen, Pape, and others believe that, as a consequence, the Europeans are busy preparing alternative options – via the EU and soft balancing.

2. Balance is about Vision

There is a different argument to be made, however, and it has to do with purpose as much as power. Purpose is about vision and values, and the Atlantic allies continue to share both visions and values. Consider the case of the Middle East. The American decision to invade Iraq provoked turmoil within the Alliance, and the subsequent American design for promoting democracy in the "Greater Middle East" was met with equal amounts of skepticism and insinuations of neo-colonialism. Still, in June 2004 the allies came into agreement and supported the G8 "Broader Middle East and North Africa Initiative" (BMENA), the same month as the allies reached agreement on NATO's (admittedly limited) involvement in Iraq. BMENA and the Iraqi engagement align with the EU's effort since the early 1990s to develop partnerships, economic liberalization, and collective security reforms in the Mediterranean – an effort encapsulated in the so-called Barcelona process. The Barcelona process followed from Middle Eastern war and conflict, notably related to the Gulf War of 1991 but also the ensuing Oslo peace process; the BMENA initiative is likewise the outcome of conflict in the region. This may tell us that the allies are poor at preventing conflict and instead react to it, but this is not new and partly inaccurate (since the allies are not the only actors involved). More interestingly, it tells us that the allies are in agreement that they must engage in the region and, moreover, must do so in order to inspire the growth of open societies. The fundamental values behind Western cooperation are in alignment, although specific blueprints at times clash.

The allies do experience problems in relation to the Greater Middle East, naturally, but they are aligning their blueprints rather than drifting apart.¹⁷ The biggest obstacle to this alignment may in fact come from Europe, as Dorothee Schmid notes. The United States is

¹⁶ Paul, T. V.: "Soft Balancing in the Age of U.S. Primacy," *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 46-71.

¹⁷ See the article produced by people associated with a project funded by the German Marshall Fund, Asmus, Ronald; Diamond, Larry; Leonard, Mark and McFaul, Michael: "A Transatlantic Strategy to Promote Democratic Development in the Broader Middle East," *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Spring 2005), pp. 7-21. See also Schmid, Dorothee: "Le partenariat, une méthode européenne de démocratisation en Méditerranée ?" *Politique étrangère*, No. 3 (2005), pp. 545-557.



searching to establish a partnership with the Europeans on this issue but Europe is paralyzed politically, unable to define its inner political contours and thus unable to convincingly advocate political democratization abroad.¹⁸ This might appear to vindicate the argument of John Mearsheimer: Europe is weak and will be mired in local or regional questions of little impact on the United States' efforts to create a global order. However, the story line should be a different one. The United States cannot take on the burden of global leadership single-handedly: it requires a concerted effort that extends to Europe and also beyond. Moreover, a global concert to create and maintain order will have the United States and Europe at its core because these two regions, more than others, share a commitment to liberal values.

This view of things comes from Classical Realism, an internal opponent to Structural Realism. Classical Realists combine purpose and power in the argument that states of the status quo will have little reason to balance each other; in contrast, they can be expected to balance – or counter more offensively – revisionist states that seek to overturn the international order. The critical question for these Realists is therefore whether Europe and the United States are drifting apart culturally and politically to such an extent that they are no longer part of the status quo. This is not so much a question of whether structure permits a challenge but first and foremost about whether the Europeans want change.

The Middle Eastern case indicates that the allies are not drifting apart, but it is worth to inquire further into the debate on Atlantic values because this debate has generated much attention. There is little doubt that European and American views of the world are not identical: Europeans are more regionally focused, as opposed to the American preoccupation with global order; Europeans shape their common foreign policy according to the EU's history of reconciliation and dialogue, where the United States more readily defends its interests by military (and other) means; Europeans are also predominantly focused on social and political coherence and thus often in favor of incremental change, where Americans tend to value the opportunities inherent in rapid change. This condition has in turn led some to conclude that Europeans and Americans inhabit two worlds apart – Venus and Mars, respectively – and that they cannot meet, much less merge.¹⁹

The Mars and Venus analogy deliberately purveys the impression that Europe is weak and simply cannot challenge the United States. Europe should therefore support the United States, is the conclusion. But this conclusion is political, in so far as Robert Kagan's political engagement lies with the neo-conservatives of the W. Bush administration, and it crudely links European policy to material weakness, as if Europeans had no choice but to be weak idealists. Michael Cox agrees with much in Kagan's analysis but is critical of this latter premise. One could just as easily argue, Cox writes, that "one of the causes of the current crisis is not just that Europe is militarily weak but that it is no longer prepared to be pushed around by the Americans."²⁰

This brings us back to the likelihood that Europe might somehow seek other options than a mere alliance with the United States. As analysts of both purpose and power, Classical Realists focus on the potentially eroding effects of different ideas. Put more concretely, they worry that the neo-conservative ideas of the Bush administration portend an ineluctable trend toward disengagement – not because structures of power demand it but because political actors want it. Maybe political leaders are simply unaware of the effects on the Alliance of

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 551 and 555.

¹⁹ Kagan, Robert (2003): *Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order*. London, Atlantic Books; Peter Van Ham, "Security and Culture: or, Why NATO Won't Last," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (December 2001), pp. 393–406.

²⁰ Cox, Michael: "Commentary: Martians and Venutians in the New World Order," *International Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 3 (2003), pp. 523-532, at p. 531.



pursuing defined narrowly policies, but the point is the same: the old model of American leadership and hegemony does not suffice for continued partnership. Renewed partnership must instead be built on the mutual respect for the ideals and values that *do* differ: Mars and Venus are in some respect real and must be incorporated in the Atlantic order. Pluralism, therefore, not unipolarity, is the recipe for continued cooperation.

David Calleo writes eloquently on this subject. The “American protectorate” is still with us but it is nevertheless “unrealistic” notably because the security problems of Europe are more “domestic and complex in character, more difficult and inappropriate for an outside power to manage.”²¹ Moreover, Europe’s architecture is today a merger of several competing models – a hybrid – and it is rooted in the histories and experiences of European nations and states. In Calleo’s prism and based on an assessment of the political and historical conditions of Atlantic cooperation, Europe must be European. This might sound like the vision of former French president, Charles de Gaulle, but it is not quite the case. De Gaulle’s vision of a “Europe of nation-states” is today part of the hybrid. Calleo instead has in mind the replacement of the “American protectorate” by a “pan-European” structure composed of three pillars: the United States, the European Union, and Russia.²²

Calleo’s call for a new structure of cooperation is not new: indeed, it dates back to the high crest of the Cold War marked by the Cuban missile crisis and the ensuing period of détente and alliance adjustment.²³ The question is really whether this structure is more realistic today than it was thirty years ago. With one eye on European aspirations and another on American limitations, Calleo answers in the positive. The answer raises two additional and related questions, however. First of all, why should Europe and the United States cooperate in a new structure instead of compete with one another? Why, in other words, should pluralism be cooperative rather than a game of hostile balancing? Secondly, in what ways have the attacks of September 11, 2001 and the American reaction to them affected the likelihood that pluralism is cooperative?

Classical Realists generally respond to the first question by pointing out that Europe and the United States share a history of critical experiences and many values related to open societies and the politics of reason and justice. Calleo speaks of “humane political values” related to open societies and politics of reason and justice, and while these ideals “ought to be universal” they cannot “reliably” be sustained on a global basis. Instead, “the children of European enlightenment” – Americans, Russians, and Europeans – are obligated to sustain and promote them in Europe.²⁴

This brings us to the question of whether such shared values will be able to withstand the shock produced by September 11. In light of Calleo’s argument that the values are best cultivated within Europe, however broadly defined, the question is also whether “the children of enlightenment” can and should attempt to spread these values beyond Europe.

Realists of all stripes – Classical as well as Structural – tend to disapprove of the way in which the W. Bush administration has responded to the terrorist attacks of September 11. They understand and applaud the decision to uproot both the Al Qaeda network and the Taleban regime in Afghanistan but they fail to see much merit in the decision to invade Iraq in March 2003. The Iraq war has diverted resources from the real fight against a network (Al-Qaeda) that must be fought by a variety of means to a war of insurgency related above all to

²¹ Calleo, David P. (2001): *Rethinking Europe’s Future*. New York, Century Foundation, p. 5.

²² See chapter 15, *ibid.*

²³ See Calleo, David P. (1970): *The Atlantic Fantasy: The U.S., NATO, and Europe*. Washington, Johns Hopkins University Press.

²⁴ Calleo, *Rethinking Europe’s Future*, *op. cit.*, p. 352.



state-building in a notoriously difficult-to-run country (Iraq). The United States, Stanley Hoffmann argues, is intoxicated by its disproportionate level of power and thus has forgotten the realist lesson of prudence: even if an empire has the power to impose direct rule, it will be threatened by rebellion and rising costs.²⁵ This imperial temptation connects to the advice – advanced by Classical Realists as well as others – that the United States should seek to build a broader structure of global cooperation.

We began this section with a discussion of the Middle East, and it is appropriate to return to the region in order to shed light on this broader structure of cooperation. The Middle East generates impressive levels of fuel and foes, both of fundamental concern to the West. A prominent realist, Zbigniew Brzezinski thus sees in the Middle East “the most volatile and dangerous region of the world” – indeed, a “Global Balkans” – and he sets out to identify reliable partners for the United States in the quest to bring stability to the region.²⁶ Revealingly, Brzezinski surveys potential allies such as Turkey, Israel, India, and Russia, and arrives at the conclusion that “Ultimately, America can look to only one genuine partner in coping with the Global Balkans: Europe.”²⁷ The reason is found in historical and cultural bonds and their effect on political, military, and economic realms of cooperation. Other Classical Realists extend this argument from the Middle East to global politics. David Calleo foresees not only a pluralist world but one “with tremendous problems – problems of income distribution, environmental degradation, and catastrophic terrorism,” and the problems “will be managed – if at all – by a genuine concert of great powers, habituated to negotiating regularly and ceaselessly to find a community of interest.”²⁸

Classical Realists appeal for reform within the West but are not overtly optimistic about the prospects for change. Richard Betts urges reform but sees none happening because of the “passivity” of the international community: other countries are too satisfied with U.S. leadership or too weak to challenge it.²⁹ Others, reaching a similar conclusion, directly criticize the new concept of “soft balancing” – referred to earlier in the discussion on Structural Realism – because they simply fail to see it in real events. There is no significant sign of a real division within the West because no state or group of states is seriously considering a challenge to the United States. There are signs of bargaining and dispute over allied ties, to be sure: the EU defense option and the protests during the Iraq crisis in 2002-2003 are symptoms of such behavior.³⁰ However, bargaining and allied disputes are regular occurrences, easily identifiable throughout the history of the Atlantic Alliance. Therefore, there is no rigorous claim to be made that friction has given way to soft balancing.³¹ Thus, if we speak of a new balance, it will be a new balance *within* the Alliance – akin to Calleo’s vision of a pluralist West, and in the vein of Betts’ assessment of the limited potential for a transatlantic rupture.

²⁵ Hoffmann, Stanley (2003): *America Goes Backward*. New York, New York Review of Books, p. 31.

²⁶ Brzezinski, Zbigniew: “Hegemonic Quicksand,” *The National Interest* (Winter 2003/04), pp. 5-16, at p. 5.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁸ “Transatlantic Folly: NATO vs. the EU,” *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (Fall 2003), pp. 17-24 at p. 23.

²⁹ Betts, Richard K.: “The Political Support System for American Primacy,” *International Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 1 (2005), pp. 1-14. Two prominent generals, Joseph Ralston and Klaus Neumann, symptomatically concluded a one-year study of European military capabilities with the observation that European leaders have “lacked the political will” to redress the balance in spending and capability. They thus worry about the viability of the Alliance in the long run. See “Retired Nato generals blast European military,” *Financial Times*, 11 October 2005.

³⁰ Brooks, Stephen G. and C. Wohlforth, William: “Hard Times for Soft Balancing,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 72-108, at pp. 91-104.

³¹ Lieber, Keir A. and Alexander, Gerard: “Waiting for Balancing: Why the World Is Not Pushing Back,” *International Security*, Vol. 30, No. 1 (Summer 2005), pp. 109-139, at p. 132.



In sum, Classical Realists are not worried that developments in, say, the Middle East are symptoms of transatlantic rupture; they identify enough common interests and values in this and other contexts to be optimistic when it comes to the potential for cooperation. They are merely guarded optimists, however, because while they believe that the West as a unit still makes sense, they also argue that it is in need of reform. Specifically, the West must be better balanced within in order to make room for distinct views of shared values, and it must tie in with a global system of governance whose purpose is not the export of Western values but the promotion of dialogue among great powers. We now turn to an assessment of this view of things in the distinct contexts of flexible cooperation in the West; policy toward rogue states like North Korea and Iran; and policy towards emerging powers like China. The key question not whether the West has sufficient common interests to cooperate; the question is whether political leadership will allow cooperation to happen.

3. The Challenge of Political Leadership

Much criticism has been launched against President W. Bush who by many observers is considered an ideologue, a child of the neo-conservative movement for American renewal, and insensitive to world politics. The effect of this barge of criticism is a natural tendency to argue that if the Atlantic Alliance currently is experiencing a crisis of political leadership, it must be because of President W. Bush. This conclusion is facile and does not adequately illuminate the politics of continued cooperation.

Critics are prevalent not only in Europe, it should be noted. As we saw earlier, many Realists, most of whom are American, criticize Bush' policies in Iraq. Other critics are more sweeping in their assessment. Stephan Halper and Jonathan Clarke thus write that W. Bush and the neo-conservative movement have "narrowed American options and augmented America's human and financial burdens" due to "a misfocused obsession with the most rigid interpretation of American sovereignty." Moreover, "their embrace of a coarse-grained unilateralism has tarnished America's moral authority."³² By discarding the past emphasis on deterrence and containment in favor of an offensive strategy to defeat threats before they reach American territory, George W. Bush has offended a good deal of the foreign policy establishment in the United States as well as among the allies – which had approved of the more cautious policies of his father, President George H. W. Bush.³³

The shift in American policy is real, naturally, and it impacts on the European "pillar" in alliance affairs. The W. Bush administration's emphasis on coalition-making, in particular, is seen as a catalyst of change. Two developments are noteworthy. First, when Defense Secretary Rumsfeld in early 2002 outlined his vision of the principle that "the mission will shape the coalition," he failed to mention NATO in his article and this in spite of the fact that he simultaneously was intimately involved in the creation of a new rapid reaction force in NATO – the NRF. Second, the Bush administration has announced a new force deployment structure, the implication of which is the re-deployment of American troops and infrastructure from old theaters like Europe to new regions of concern.³⁴ Combined, the principle and the re-

³² Halper, Stephan and Clarke, Jonathan (2004): *America Alone: The Neo-Conservatives and the Global Order*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 297.

³³ See for instance, Newhouse, John (2003): *Imperial America: The Bush Assault on World Order*. New York, Knopf, p. 11.

³⁴ Rumsfeld, Donald: "Transforming the Military," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 3 (May/June 2002), pp. 20–32. President Bush unveiled the plan for re-deployment when speaking to Veterans from Foreign Wars Convention, 16 August 2004. The plan is presented in a fact sheet released by the White House on the same date: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2004/08/20040816-5.html>.



deployment imply that European allies must work harder to operate with the United States in security missions. Moreover, they cannot trust that the sheer presence of the North Atlantic Council will guarantee them any type of influence on the strategic decisions of the mission. In short, they must work harder and possibly enjoy less influence.

The perspective is not appealing to the European allies, for obvious reasons, and it becomes even less appealing in light of the controversy surrounding the Bush doctrine of preemption and the execution of this doctrine in the case of Iraq. The allies may work hard, with little influence, and with involvement in dubious offensive wars as a result.

Yet this may not spell the end of the Alliance, which brings us back to Classical Realism. The point was that common interests and values pull the allies in a similar direction but that political leadership is required. And this is where the above view of the Bush administration is problematic because it is one-sided and often politically biased. It is one-sided because it eschews problems of political organization and leadership in Europe. It is often biased because a negative view of the Bush administration facilitates the presentation of an alternative political project – linked to the Democrats in the United States or “autonomists” in Europe.

Europe is experiencing a crisis of leadership of significant proportions. The means with which European leaders imagined they could pull themselves out of the crisis was the Constitutional Treaty: following rejections of it by popular referenda in France and the Netherlands (May-June 2005), this treaty is currently suspended and the contours of a greater crisis of political legitimacy are apparent. Tony Blair’s Britain, which seeks to develop a leadership role qua the ESDP, now does not have to follow through on its commitment to submit the treaty to a referendum, which most likely would have led to the treaty’s rejection, but is left to ponder how it can translate military prowess into wider political influence. France, Britain’s necessary partner in ESDP affairs, gains little momentum with its wider strategy of creating partnerships with Russia and Germany, and it is in any case unclear how this strategy ties in with Britain and the ESDP issue. France and Britain have yet to resolve a basic question underlying their common project – the ESDP – namely, how to tie the United States to European affairs.³⁵

Another often overlooked aspect in the debate on transatlantic security affairs is the degree to which flexible security cooperation has made its entry into *both* NATO and the EU. Military reform in NATO has since the mid-1990s been guided by the wish to create forces of projection, complete with command infrastructures and combat support units. Concomitantly, NATO nations have come to recognize that operations will not involve the Alliance as a whole, given the nature of campaigns in far-away places. NATO partners will likely be involved; and some NATO nations will likely abstain. Flexible packaging is thus part and parcel of NATO’s evolution, and it became so before Rumsfeld outlined his “coalition-of-the-willing” vision in 2002.

Flexibility also marks the ESDP in important new ways. These were created to form part of the Constitutional Treaty, and the reforms are being implemented in spite of the Treaty’s uncertain fate. At issue is notably “permanent structured cooperation” and its associated capability goal of “targeted combat units.” Structured cooperation was initially suggested by France as a means to create a political avant-garde but it became, as a consequence of the Treaty negotiations, a capability generating mechanism – mainly because France agreed to this change of focus in order to obtain Britain’s backing for the principle of flexible

³⁵ Howorth, Jolyon: “The Euro-Atlantic Security Dilemma: France, Britain, and the ESDP,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 39-54.



cooperation.³⁶ Still, the change of focus is less important than the principle itself. The new capability goal – targeted combat units of 1,500 soldiers each – is less ambitious than the previous capability goal – the Helsinki Headline Goal: a force of 50-60,000 soldiers – and thus lends itself more readily to the national ambitions of the great powers in the EU, France and Britain foremost among them. A new European Defence Agency caps off collective defense planning and it may succeed in creating a type of defense industrial policy at the European level. Nevertheless, military forces remain in national hands and the most capable nations now have the institutional means to prepare themselves for operational coalition-making and thus executive leadership. Again, this process is taking place independently of American domestic politics.

A European crisis of political leadership as well as a general trend toward flexible cooperation put the critical view of the Bush administration into perspective. Turning now to the second issue of this section, rogue states, we must add that the allies seem to converge on this hitherto controversial issue and its relation to the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, an important development considering the transatlantic clash of views on the issue of Iraq. The two test cases beyond that of Iraq have been North Korea and Iran. One might have included Afghanistan here. However, Afghanistan has become NATO's primary external operation because the allies are in agreement here, and remaining subjects of dispute are minor and certainly so in relation to the cases of North Korea and Iran.³⁷

In the case of North Korea, it may be significant that North Korea and the United States announced September 19, 2005 that the former would give up its nuclear weapons program and re-join the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty while the latter underscored its lack of hostile intentions and interest in providing nuclear energy to North Korea.³⁸ The accord is weak on specifics concerning implementation, presumably the main topic for an announced sixth round of negotiations set to begin in November 2005, and no sooner was the ink dry on the accord than new controversies emerged.³⁹ A conclusive deal on the Korean peninsula is therefore not sure to be reached soon but it is important to note that the Bush administration apparently has decided to make every effort to reach a diplomatic agreement. This decision follows, in some ways, from the decision in early 2004 to enter into multilateral talks but should also be viewed in light of the difficulties the United States experiences in Iraq. An American official thus told the Herald Tribune that “the lesson of Iraq is that we can never again confront a country about its weapons unless we show that we have tried every available

³⁶ Diedrichs, Udo: “The Development of the European Security and Defence Policy and its Implications for NATO: Cooperation and Competition,” *Journal of Transatlantic Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Spring 2005), pp. 55-70 at p. 58.

³⁷ One such minor dispute concerns the relationship between NATO's peacekeeping mission (app. 12,000 soldiers) and the American-led coalition forces (app. 18,000 soldiers) operating in southern Afghanistan to fight Taleban and Al-Qaeda forces. U.S. Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld suggested at a NATO defense ministers' meeting in mid-September 2005 that NATO take on both missions, but the Europeans refused to do so, fearing that the latter mission would undermine the former. “Les Etats-Unis mettent l'OTAN sous pression,” September 13, 2005; *International Herald Tribune*: “European balking at new Afghan role,” *Le Monde*, 14 September 2005. Afghanistan's President Karzai subsequently called for a change of American strategy, a call that might advance NATO's engagement in southern Afghanistan, although much remains uncertain in this respect. See “Karzai Renews Rethink Terror Plea,” *BBC News*, 20 September 2005, in http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4265040.stm.

³⁸ The accord is available at <http://news.ft.com/cms/s/de907888-28e0-11da-8a5e-00000e2511c8.html>.

³⁹ “N Korea accord hits first hurdle,” *BBC News*, 20 September 2005, in <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4261284.stm>.



alternative to disarm it.”⁴⁰ This represents a step back from the pre-emptive strike doctrine launched in 2002 and an alignment with European positions.

A similar development has occurred in the context of Iran, although the prospects in this case are less positive. In March 2005, the United States and European states, notably France, Britain, and Germany (the EU-3), reached agreement that the United States should support negotiations to reach a settlement on Iran’s nuclear ambitions (which it claims are non-military) while Europeans would agree to refer the matter to the United Nations Security Council if the negotiations failed. Hopes that an accord would be reached were dashed in August 2005 when Iran first rejected a European offer and then “un-froze” an agreement to suspend important parts of its nuclear program. Iran thus broke sealed equipment at its Isfahan plant and resumed the process that turns raw uranium into gas for enrichment.⁴¹ Iran’s new president, Mahmud Ahmadinejad, raised the stakes in mid-September when he before the United Nations General Assembly, in a speech eagerly awaited by the Europeans, criticized Western diplomacy, defended Iran’s right to pursue its current nuclear program, and offered to share it with other Islamic states.⁴² Days later, Iran warned that it might withdraw from the NPT. Circumstances like these push the Europeans and the United States together: by late September 2005, they succeeded in getting the IAEA Board of Governors to express its absence of confidence in Iran and prepare the referral of the issue to the United Nations Security Council.

The situation in relation to Iran’s nuclear program is thus unsettled and dangerous but the Atlantic allies are coming into alignment on the issue, which is the important point here. The Europeans may have learned that negotiations with likely nuclear proliferators are intrinsically difficult and demand, among other things, that soft words are accompanied by a big stick. Moreover, it appears certain that European political ambitions – potentially a source of “balancing” behavior – are downgraded due to problems related to the Constitutional Treaty and the question of Turkish enlargement, and these ambitions are in part channeled into flexible security frameworks compatible with the American security agenda.

On the American side, the Bush administration has been a proponent of new and controversial security policy, but it may be moderating its behavior in important respects, spurred not least by the Iraq experience. Observers have thus not failed to notice that the appointment of Condoleezza Rice as secretary of state heralds a new “realistic” approach – in contrast to the ideologically motivated neo-conservative approach.⁴³ The extent of this shift is difficult to gauge – Rice predictably rejects the idea that she represents a new “realistic” turn in U.S. foreign policy,⁴⁴ and she remains committed to the Bush doctrine of promoting democratic reform in the Middle East - but there is at least some evidence, highlighted also in

⁴⁰ “News Analysis: An accord on North Korea, but more discord,” *International Herald Tribune*, 20 September 2005, in <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/09/20/news/assess21.php>.

⁴¹ “Iran Restarts Nuclear Facility,” *CBS News*, 10 August 2005, in <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2005/08/10/world/main769817.shtml>.

⁴² For these events, see the *Radio Free Europe* special: “Iran’s Nuclear Program,” in <http://www.rferl.org/specials/iran-nuclear>.

⁴³ See for instance “On Her Own,” *The Nation*, 29 January 2005; “The Rise of Rice and a ‘New’ Realism,” *The Christian Science Monitor*, 17 March 2005; “Condi On the Rise,” *Time*, 28 March 2005; Rothkopf, David J.: “Inside the Committee that Runs the World,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 147 (March/April 2005); “The Condi Doctrine,” *Time*, 15 August 2005; Rose, Gideon: “Get Real,” *New York Times*, 18 August 2005.

⁴⁴ Cited in Hoagland, Jim: “Rice’s Mission to Foggy Bottom,” *Washington Post*, 25 August 2005, in <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/24/AR2005082401833.html>. For the view that the Bush presidency is split between the new “realism” and the old “neo-conservatism” see Kaplan, Fred: “The President Has Two Faces,” 16 June 2005, in <http://slate.msn.com/id/2121021>.



the above analysis, that political leadership in the Atlantic area is capable of realizing part of the potential for continued cooperation.

These issues help account for the rapprochement on Iran and North Korea, and we saw in the previous section how a similar rapprochement was taking place in relation to the blueprint for reform in the Broader Middle East and North Africa. Crudely speaking, these countries and regions represent the “losers” on the present geopolitical chessboard because they lack the political, economic, and social resources to challenge the position of the West. They can make specific threats, and the West should take these seriously, but they do not represent a general geopolitical challenge. Such a challenge may in contrast be emerging from the “winners” on the chessboard, notably China, the subject matter of the final reflections of this section.

China is central to the emergence of a new order and not only because of its size and location. China is also capable of reaching out to other countries in an effort to create a “true” balancing act vis-à-vis the United States (the false balancing act would then be the European one). At the turn of the century this scenario attracted considerably attention notably because the then-prime minister of Russia, Yegenyev Primakov, propelled a geopolitical vision breaking with Russia’s past doctrine of liberal cooperation (the Kozyrev doctrine of 1993) and seeking to align Russia along with China and India in a new “strategic triangle” whose purpose – unmistakably – would be to balance the United States. Primakov was thus a stark critic of NATO’s intervention in Kosovo, a war that upset also China because it took place without an explicit United Nations Security Council mandate, meaning China could not veto it, and because NATO happened to bomb the Chinese embassy in Belgrade. The question is partly whether such a “strategic triangle” is in the making and, if so, whether European and American leaders are aware of their common interest in checking it.

There are indications that such a triangle is being cultivated, at least as an idea to be explored. The three countries involved have thus met at the margins of the UN General Assembly meeting in 2002, a first occurrence of its kind, and the countries’ subsequent bilateral diplomacy were seen as evidence of this process’ dynamic.⁴⁵ Significant is also Russia and China’s drive to transform Central Asian security cooperation under their leadership in the forum of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), upgraded to an organization in 2001. The partnership of these countries led to the first joint military exercise ever, in August 2005, duly labeled “Peace Mission 2005.” India became an SCO observer country in mid-2005, just as Iran and Pakistan did. Military exercises between India and Russia, to be held in India, were scheduled for October 2005, and Russian officials indicated that follow-up exercises to “Peace Mission 2005” could be part of a plan to upgrade the operational capacity of SCO. In a worst case scenario, according to a passionate observer, the SCO is about to become a “menacing confederacy of powerful nations” and a “formidable adversary for the United States.”⁴⁶

There are reasons to temper this conclusion, however.⁴⁷ Russia may be a significant exporter of arms to both China and India, but Russia is a country in crisis while China is not. Diverging rates of growth and ultimately strength will generate problems of cooperation, notably in regards to influence in Central Asia, just as Russia’s weakness makes it more attentive to American incentives for cooperation.⁴⁸ In addition, India and China share a

⁴⁵ Pant, Harsh V.: “The Moscow-Beijing-Delhi ‘Strategic Triangle’: An Idea Whose Time May Never Come,” *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (September 2004), pp. 311-328.

⁴⁶ Stakelbeck, Frederick W.: “An Anti-American Confederacy May Loom in Asia,” *The American Thinker*, 21 September 2005, in http://www.americanthinker.com/articles.php?article_id=4837.

⁴⁷ See Pant, fn. 44, for an overview.

⁴⁸ See Cheng, Joseph Y. S.: “Challenges to China’s Russian Policy in the Early 21st Century,” *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 34, No. 4 (2004), pp. 480-502.



history of mutual antagonism, and India's decision to go nuclear in 1998 was not least motivated by a desire to check Chinese designs. Moreover, the SCO is primarily organized to counter separatism, extremism, and terrorism – euphemisms for Islamism and the fear of the SCO states that they may not be able to maintain control of their territories. Defensive motivations rather than strategic visions are thus to a great extent the rationale of the SCO.

Europe and the United States quite obviously share an interest in influencing this type of Asian cooperation, and not only because of their recent large military engagement in Afghanistan and neighboring countries. Europe and the United States need these three states – Russia, China, and India – as partners if they wish to construct a functioning mechanism for global order. Naturally, at issue is not the making of a global government but a viable arena where diplomacy is able to align these countries on critical issues such as terrorism, proliferation, world trade, and development. This is what David Calleo has in mind when he speaks of a global concert to address big issues.

Europe and the United States can hope to develop such a concert only if they are clear about their blueprint for handling menacing developments related notably to China's ability to counter the security architecture of these Western countries. A concert should be based on dispassionate assessments of diverging as well as converging interests. At issue is not least China's sense that the United States' missile defense policy may rob it of great power leverage, and China could choose either to increase its nuclear forces and/or export nuclear weapons and missile technology. These are high risk strategies, however, because China's attempt to counter the United States could provoke India's rearmament, the nuclearization of South Korea and Japan, and renewed crisis in the case of Taiwan which will be likely to increase its efforts to acquire effective missile defenses from the United States.⁴⁹ These risks represent policy options for the West because the allies are coming into agreement on hitherto contentious issues such as missile defense⁵⁰ and because the opportunity exists for clever diplomacy to stabilize relations with China.

In this case, as was the conclusion also in relation to the other issues of flexible security cooperation and rogue states, there is a need for continuing Western alignment. Moreover, in this particular case of China, much of the responsibility lies with the European leg of the Alliance because the United States is greatly involved in these issues and has defined their interests in them while Europeans have not. Europe's approach – bilaterally as well as multilaterally via the EU – is dominated by two issues that lack strategic vision and which in addition tend to work at cross-purposes: a political dialogue focused on human rights issues, and Europe's access to Chinese markets. This is not to say that European governments are unaware of strategic issues; clearly they are not. However, it is to say that they lack the ability to coalesce around a common vision and to mobilize resources behind it.⁵¹ This is of

⁴⁹ For a discussion, see Dyvad, Peter: "China's Response to the US Missile Defence Programme: National Options and Regional Implications," in Heurlin, Bertel and Rynning, Sten (eds.) (2005): *Missile Defence: International, Regional and National Implications*. London, Routledge, pp. 133-154.

⁵⁰ See Rynning, Sten: "Reluctant Allies? Europe and Missile Defence," in Heurlin and Rynning, *op. cit.*, pp. 111-132.

⁵¹ This is visible, for instance, in the way in which the EU handled the arms embargo issue in 2003-2004 – "actors within the system tended to position themselves on a case-by-case basis rather than through a coherent policy" – and this in spite of the newly adopted European Security Strategy. Kreutz, Joakim: "Reviewing the EU Arms Embargo on China: The Clash between Value and Rationale in the European Security Strategy," *Central European Review of International Affairs*, No. 22 (Summer 2004), pp. 43-58. David Shambaugh notes in relation to the same issue, the arms embargo, that the United States and the EU have more commonalities than differences on the issue of China but that they are poor at understanding one another. Therefore, "it is long overdue that those in the United States and Europe who work on China and Asian affairs interact considerably



course a general problem in the EU, compounded, as already noted, by the Constitutional Treaty crisis and the issue of Turkish membership, but the problem is aggravated by the global character of the Chinese issue: the EU simply lacks a history and habit of addressing global security issues. Given the interests shared with the United States in relation to Asia and China, it is due time for a change of pace.

Conclusion

At the outset of this article we noted how the now former U.S. ambassador to NATO, Nicholas Burns, in 2003 thought he had encountered the most severe threat to the Alliance's future. Burns is now Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs and thus an integral part of the new team at the U.S. State Department that must rebuild allied ties after some bruising experiences. This new team, and the new impetus for allied cooperation, builds on the fact that allied tensions are rooted not so much in a particular person's policies – namely, George W. Bush's – but in a complex challenge to allied cohesion: diverse new security threats, distant regional engagements, and demands for flexible coalition building.

The scope of this challenge no doubt heralds turbulence for allied diplomacy but not its demise. This article investigated the potential for alliance continuity and found that the allies share enough values and interests to sustain the alliance: whether in relation to Iran and the Middle East, Afghanistan and Central Asia, or China and the Far East. Political leadership is vital to the realization of this potential, however, and here the article is cautiously optimistic: it is optimistic because the wake of the Iraq war has revealed a common awareness of these shared values and interests; it is cautiously optimistic only because friction continues to occur in relation to flexible designs for cooperation and rogue states and because Europe lacks the habit of thinking in global strategic terms.

The article's conclusions are rooted in a certain understanding of how the world works, as are all conclusions. The understanding here is Classical Realist. The article first engaged the broader Realist debate, notably in order to emphasize the distinction between Structural and Classical Realists. The former, often prominent in the debate on NATO, tend to be pessimists and search for signs that the Europeans are beginning to “balance” the United States. Structural Realists agree that Europe will continue to be a regional issue (though they disagree on the prospects for peace or war in the region) of little relevance to the United States' global engagement. John Mearsheimer, a critic of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003, thus does not mention Europe in his assessment of post-Iraq policy.

Zbigniew Brzezinski does mention Europe and even labels it America's best ally in Middle Eastern questions. This view, starkly contrasting the view of Mearsheimer, is drawn from the Classical Realist understanding of power and purpose. Section two and three of this article explored this understanding. Section two outlined the big view, using the Middle East as the point of entry into the Classical Realist understanding of pluralism in current world politics and the argument that the Atlantic Alliance will survive only if it is reformed to reflect political pluralism, and also the argument that a strengthened Alliance must tie in with a type of global concert of great powers to handle common problems. In essence, the West must unite in order to form the core of such a concert.

Section three confronted this big view with a series of issues that trouble the Alliance and which highlight the importance of political leadership. The discussion criticized the

more with those involved in transatlantic relations.” “The New Strategic Triangle: U.S. and European Reactions to China's Rise,” *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 3 (Summer 2005), pp. 7-25.



widespread view that George W. Bush and the neoconservatives are to blame for the Alliance's troubles: Europe's crisis of identity and political leadership and also the complexity of today's threats are at least as important to the understanding of NATO's challenges. Complexity and a weakened collective leadership have resulted in designs for flexible cooperation significantly in both NATO and the EU. The broad recognition of this necessity is one encouraging sign. Another is the growing alignment on the issue of nuclear proliferation in relation to North Korea and Iran, although both cases remain unpredictable and potentially disruptive. Finally, the case of China, Russia, and India provides ground for optimism in the sense that shared Western interests are readily identifiable, as is the scope for diplomatic action. Worryingly, Europeans seem to be realizing the depth of this issue only slowly, inhibited as European strategic thinking is by the aforementioned European identity crisis.

The overall conclusion is that NATO will continue but also undergo significant reform, notably to better reflect political pluralism. Pluralism must be operational in the shape of flexible coalitions, but also in the shape of political coordination at the highest levels of state. This is the recipe for the continued influence of the West in world politics. There are reasons to be cautiously optimistic, as underscored here, but it is appropriate to conclude with an observation made by Henry Kissinger in relation to political leadership. At issue is an "educational challenge," namely "how to graduate the computer age from the processing of information to the fostering of a vision of our society's destiny."⁵² The prime challenge of political leadership today is to define the substance and direction of the West, and there is a continuing need for this to be done.

⁵² Kissinger, Henry (2001): *Does America Need a Foreign Policy? Toward a Diplomacy for the 21st Century*. New York, Simon & Schuster, p. 286.